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Inside the squalid Fraserburgh flat where woman left dogs for SIX weeks without food or water

Samantha Stockdale's two pets, Max and Marshmallow, were reduced to drinking out of the toilet bowl.

Samantha Stockdale abandoned her animals for weeks with no food or water. Image: DC Thomson

by **Jamie Ross**

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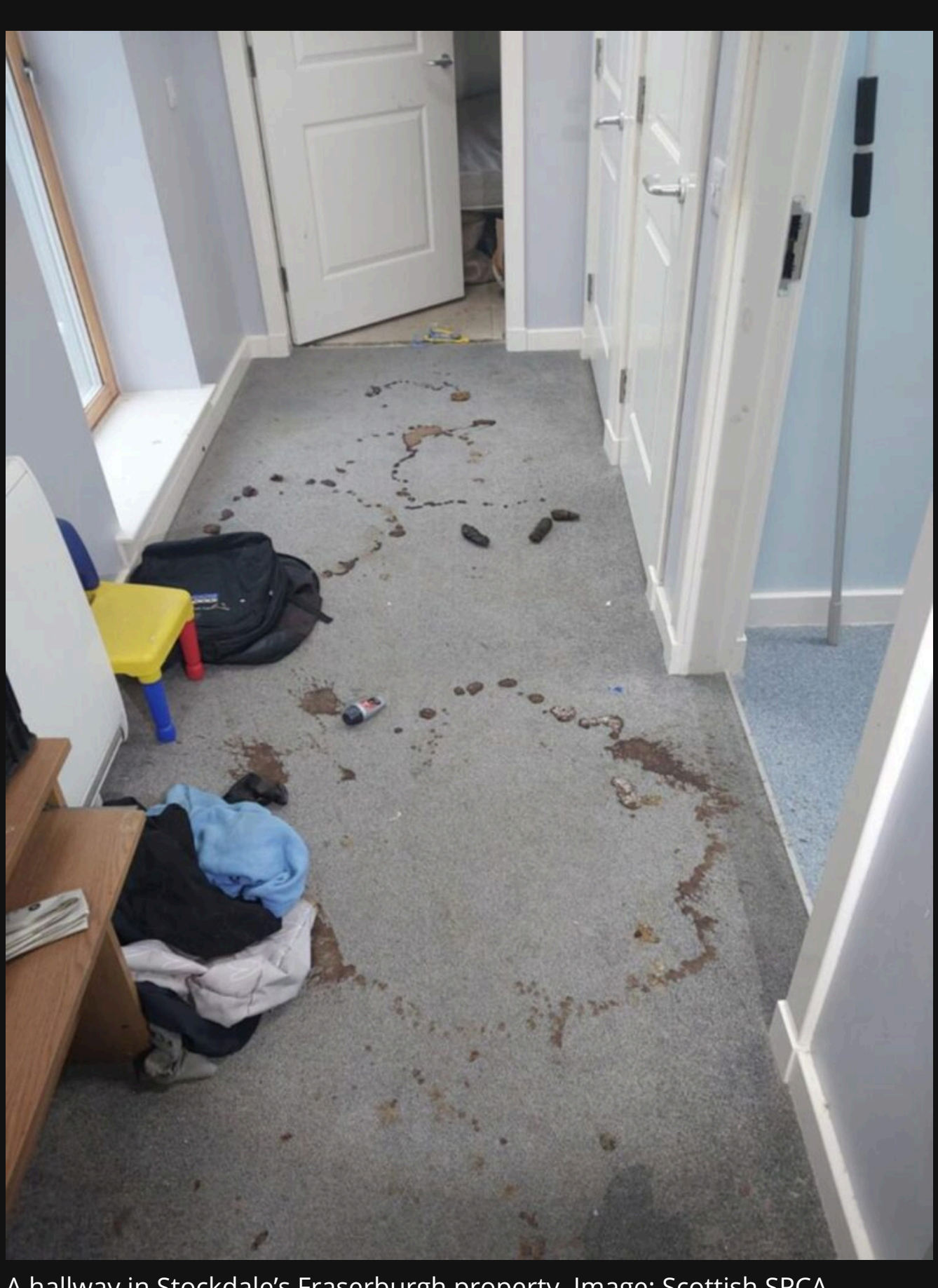
Dogs who had to survive for six weeks in a trashed Fraserburgh home were reduced to drinking water out of a toilet in one of the worst cases of "extreme neglect" the Scottish SPCA has ever seen.

Max, a six-year-old German Shepherd, and Marshmallow, a four-year-old Staffordshire Bull Terrier, were left to fend for themselves when Samantha Stockdale's home was forced open by the police in 2024.

Vets believe Max and Marshmallow had been neglected for six weeks inside the squalid Heritage Way flat and had no access to food or water.

Stockdale, who appeared at Peterhead Sheriff Court for causing the dogs unnecessary suffering, has now been told she will be banned from keeping any animals for the next five years.

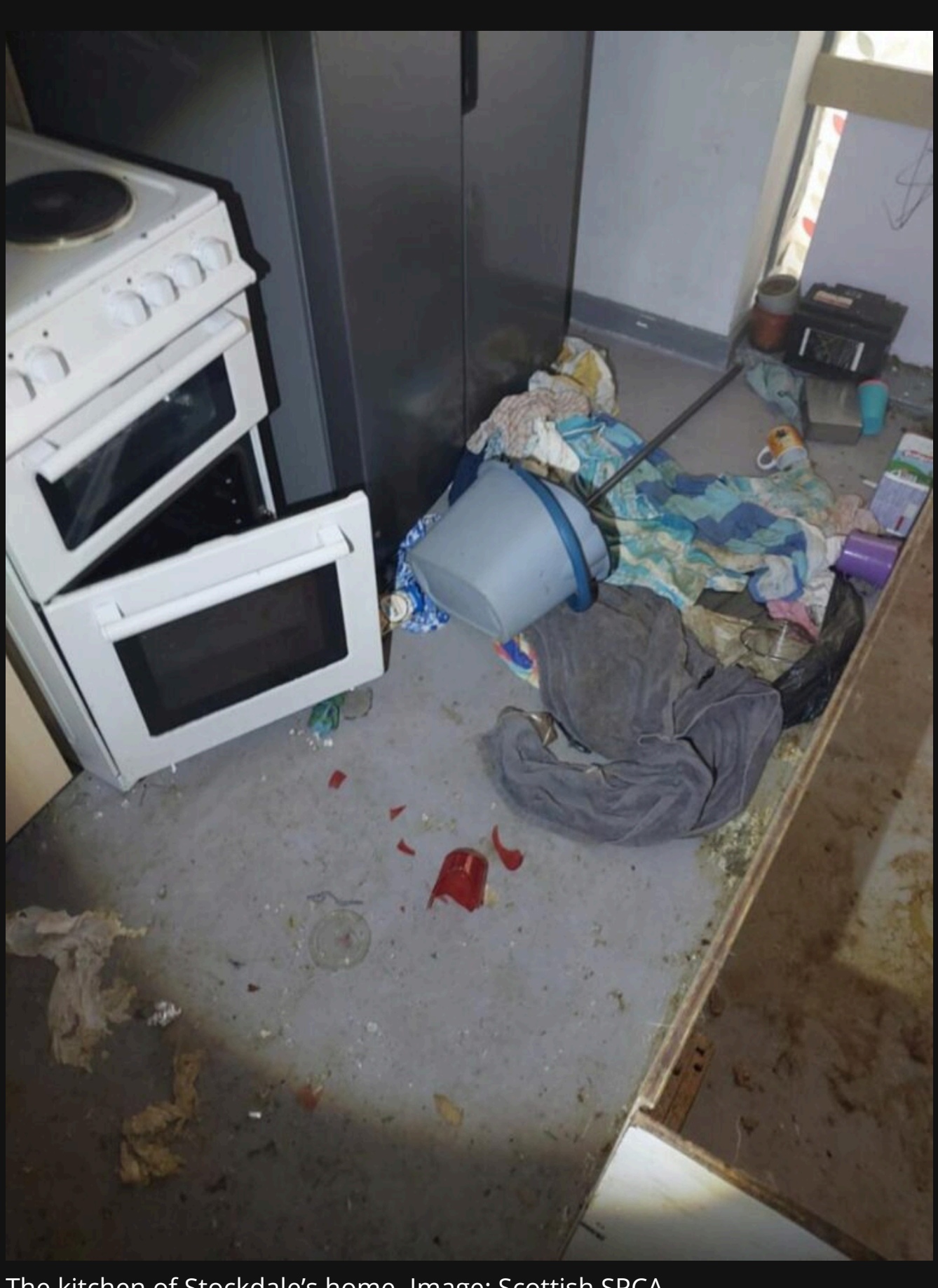


A hallway in Stockdale's Fraserburgh property. Image: Scottish SPCA

'No food or water' for weeks

The court heard that 32-year-old Stockdale, who has since moved out of the area and is now living on Holland Street in Aberdeen, had been visited by police for a matter unrelated to her treatment of the dogs.

The Scottish SPCA, however, were already aware of concerns surrounding the pets and had been in discussions with her previously.



The kitchen of Stockdale's home. Image: Scottish SPCA

Fiscal depute Daniel Lynch told the court the home contained rubbish, faeces and urine in almost every room when constables visited on June 25 2024.

"A Scottish SPCA inspector arrived at the locus and was met by Police Scotland officers," he said.

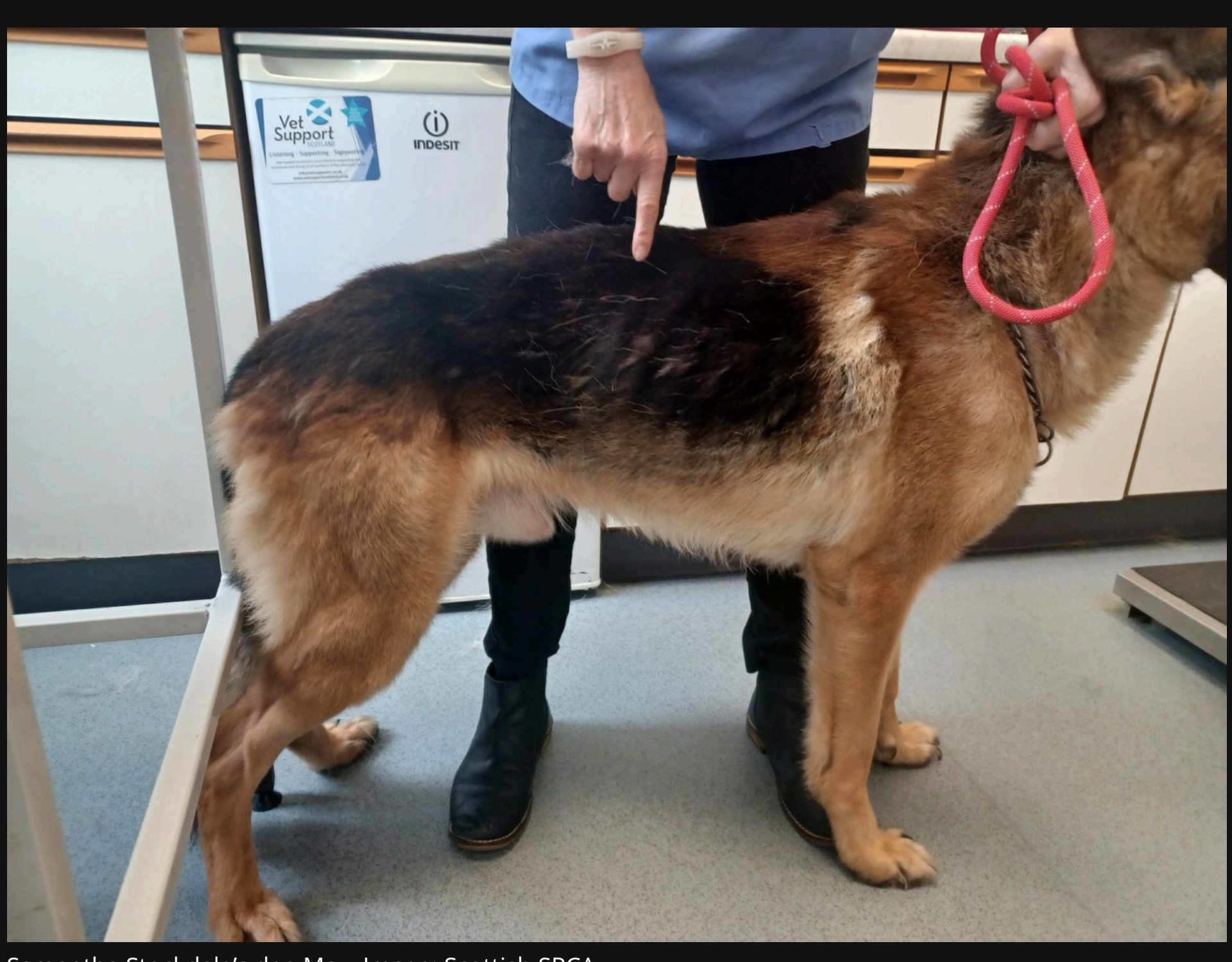
"There was broken glass and broken plywood on the floor. Police say this was from the last time they forced entry into the property and did not appear to have been cleared up.

"The living room was found to be in disarray with bags of rubbish and personal items littered over the floor. There were empty packets of food which had been chewed by the dogs.

"There was no food or water available for the dogs throughout the locus and they had been observed to be drinking from a toilet bowl.

"There was urine and faeces found throughout the house. It was found in almost every room, I believe."

Mr Lynch added that the dogs were removed by the Scottish SPCA to a rehoming centre, with vets concluding that it would have taken six weeks of neglect for the animals to fall into the condition they were found in.



Samantha Stockdale's dog Max. Image: Scottish SPCA

'One of the worst cases of extreme neglect I have seen'

Last night, an inspector for the animal charity welcomed Stockdale's five-year ban on owning any animals.

"It was heartbreaking to see them in such poor conditions," she said.

"It is one of the worst cases of extreme neglect I have seen in years. It was totally disgusting, abhorrent and heart-wrenching to see that someone could keep animals in those conditions.

"We are pleased with the sheriff's decision. Stockdale showed very little regard for her dogs' welfare.

"However, while a ban is the only way to ensure that this does not happen again to any animal, there is currently no system to monitor disqualification orders or track repeat offenders, which will significantly reduce the power of this sentencing.

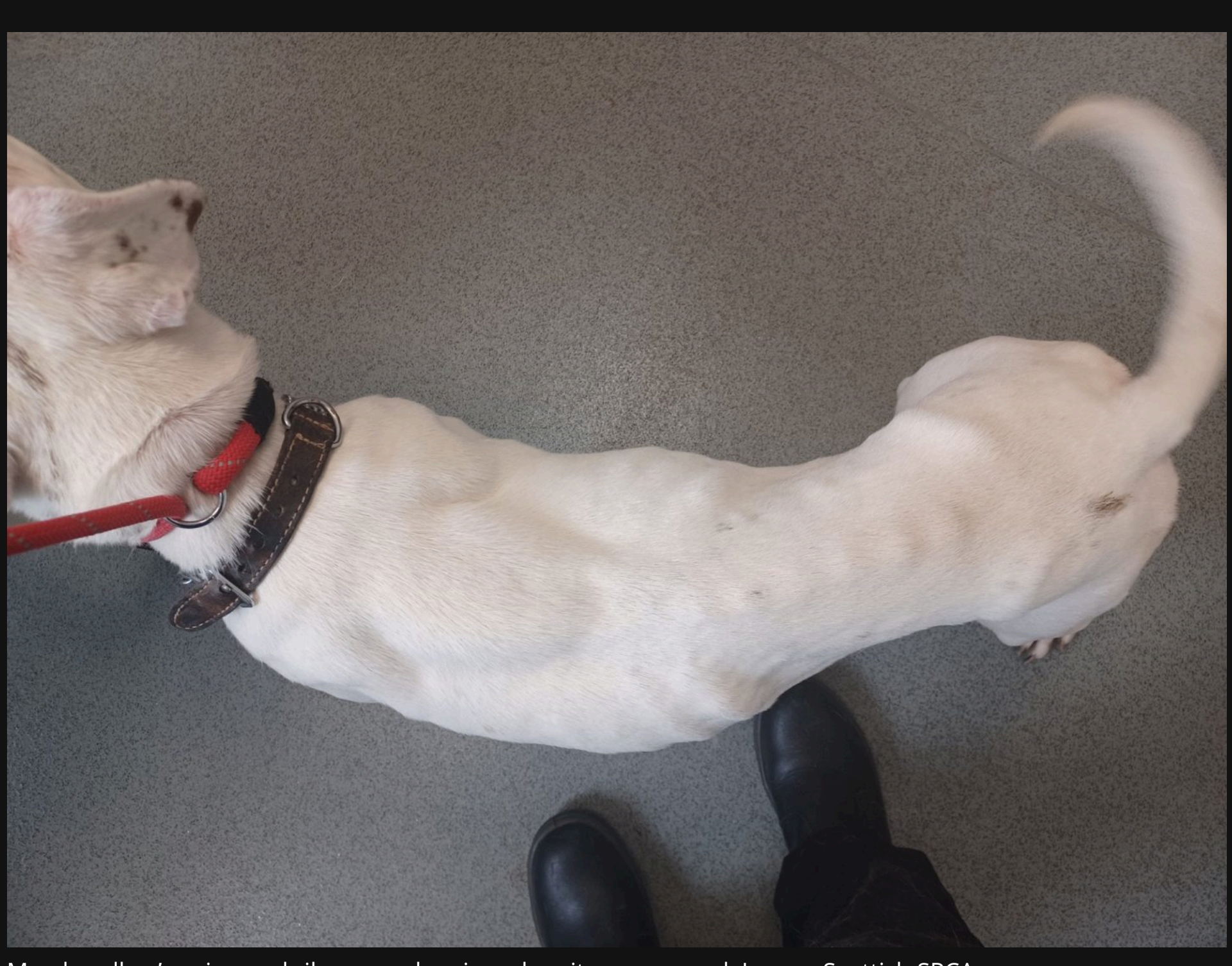
"That's why we're calling for the creation of a National Animal Offenders Register, so criminals like Stockdale cannot go on to hurt other animals undetected."

A vet, who treated both dogs when they were rescued by the Scottish SPCA, added: "Their owner would have been fully aware that they were hungry because of their behaviour around food.

"They also would have been fully aware that their food intake was not adequate for them because of their poor body condition.

"In my professional opinion, Max and Marshmallow would have taken six weeks of inadequate nutrition to be in the body condition they were in when I examined them.

"During this time, they were caused unnecessary suffering as they would have been distressed seeking food all the time."



Marshmallow's spine and ribs were showing when it was rescued. Image: Scottish SPCA

Owner's remorse

Defence lawyer Marianne Milligan, representing Stockdale, said her client had suffered from mental health issues.

Stockdale, 32, appeared from custody for the offence in February this year after she failed to attend court for the case, when she pleaded guilty to a single charge of causing the animals unnecessary suffering.

Reports on her background were called for by the sitting sheriff at the time.

But Stockdale subsequently did not show up for sentencing at the case's calling in March.

She then again failed to appear on time for court on Monday, citing travel issues, delaying the hearing of the case until the afternoon.

"She does suffer from bad mental health," Ms Milligan said.

"She's had quite a lot of trauma in her life. In the past, she's also been referred to psychiatrists. And although this doesn't excuse her behaviour, the writer of the report says it could have contributed to how she was feeling at the time.

"[The report] says it was 'difficult to ascertain Ms Stockdale's level of responsibility, but she did appear to show remorse on the conditions her animals were living in'."

Sheriff Robert McDonald, sentencing Stockdale, told her "the most appropriate way" for her to be dealt with was by placing her under the supervision of the social work department for one year in addition to her animal ban.

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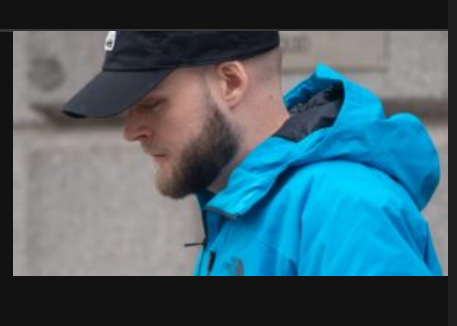

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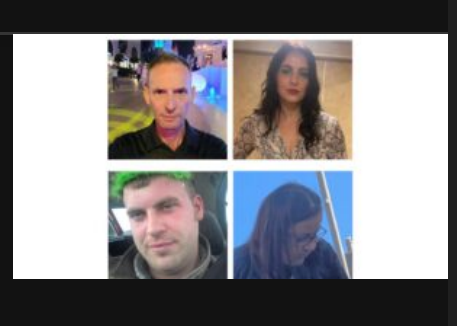

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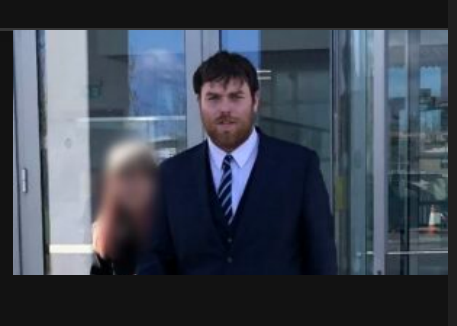

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